

# Group Discusses Small Business Needs

**By Carol-Ann Nicholson**

**CALAIS** - A group of business people from Calais and Machias met at My Favorite Things on Main Street Saturday morning to talk about the growth of small business in the area.

"I was really pleased with the way things went," says State Representative Anne Perry. "A lot of pertinent issues were discussed and people seemed very interested. In fact, the forum was scheduled to last from 8-10 a.m. and we had to cut people off at the end because everyone had things to say. There was a lot of good interchange."

More than 97 percent of all Maine businesses are small businesses, and they employ 61 per cent of all Maine workers. Nearly three-quarters of net new jobs in Maine are created by small business.

"It is the backbone of Maine's economy and is cen-

tral to our way of life," Perry says.

"That's why House Majority Leader John Richardson put together a group called the Democratic Working Group on Small Business Growth," she continues. "Its role is to improve and make the business climate better, to look at the needs of small businesses, to encourage and support them and to look at things like a favorable tax climate, competitive rates for worker's compensation insurance, affordable health insurance for employees, education, training, things like that."

The Calais meeting represented the fourth of seven small business forums held around the state. The meetings are intended to give the Working Group feedback on a proposed small business "bill of rights" that some lawmakers will bring to the Legislature when it reconvenes in January.

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## Needs

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"From the forums held around the state, I've learned how vital small business is to Maine as a whole, and particularly to Washington County," Perry says. "I've worked with Keith Small, director of small business for WHCA, Harold Clossey's boss, and know how important this is."

"We talked about things, including how to make information for small businesses more available; how to make the

hoops less difficult to jump through and streamlining the process; talked about what a small business is; about health care issues and affording the providing the health care to employees; liability insurance, particularly after 9/11; workmen's compensation; access to low-cost, long-term capital; and the availability of resources as they apply to grants.

"We also talked about the regulatory process, things like the resale certificates and ways to mobilize state resources on behalf of small business."